

entered in Seville alone, although how many may remain to take the black veil is still to be seen. The nuns who were in the convents at the time of their dissolution might have left and returned to the world, but hardly any throughout Spain availed themselves of the permission. Those who did so were allowed a peseta a day, barely a shilling, and few can form any idea of the misery that was experienced within those walls for some years afterwards; their small stipend not even paid, and many who had no kind relations to depend on for assistance were half starving. But they still remained within their convents, and sad must have been the feelings of the wretched nuns to find themselves thus reduced to beggary; many who had, perhaps, brought a rich dowry with them. The convents were fast becoming deserted, for the nuns were dying off, and no new ones allowed to enter; now, however, their numbers are increasing rapidly. All who take the veil are obliged to have a fortune of fourteen thousand reals, about one hundred and fifty pounds.

We went to see one take the white veil in the convent of Santa Paula, which was formerly very wealthy; and where those of noble blood only were received. The portal of the church is pretty and quaint, a sort of Gothic architecture, the whole encircled by a row of azulejos and the "Tanto Monta," the motto of the Catholic sovereigns. The convent church is very handsome within; the grating which divides the portion allotted to the public from that devoted to the nuns faces the high altar. There were but few people present, the novelty of the thing having now subsided. The bride herself was dressed in white, and very badly dressed she was. She entered the convent at once, her friends and relations remaining outside in the church. There was an orchestra which played polkas; and the curtain being lowered before the

reja prevented all view of what was going on in the interior. When the curtain was withdrawn, we saw a dim, mysterious scene behind the reja; the nuns, with their black veils ranged down the sides of the convent chapel, each holding a torch in her hand; the novices, with their white veils, standing in the centre; behind them, a table, on which was placed a small figure of the Saviour as a child, surrounded by flowers and all kinds of ornaments. The lady herself moved about, and came forward several times to the grating with a taper in her hand; the organ played, and the nuns were supposed to be singing, but the music effectually drowned their voices. The curtain fell and rose again, and the second act commenced; the novice appeared in the dress of the order, with an enormous crown of silver tinsel and roses upon her head. She said farewell to her friends, and then the door was shut, and she went round to all the nuns to embrace them.

There is something sad and solemn in that kiss, that welcome as it were to a new life, that breaking of all earthly ties, that complete and entire devotion of the soul to God. It is an impressive sight, and one cannot help meditating whether the principal actor in the scene has really thought seriously over the life on which she is about to enter; and yet no one present seemed to view it in a solemn light. They were laughing and talking, and making various remarks on everything around them; the attention, of the women more particularly, being divided between the dress of the novice and that of the image on the table. However, her noviciate is but commencing, and she has yet time to return to the world, if she finds this life of seclusion disagreeable to her. One young lady, who took the white veil a short time ago, left the convent at the expiration of four days! Nuns, however, seem very happy, and do enjoy a little gossip as much as

any people I ever saw. Their delight when visitors arrive is unbounded, and I believe they know all the scandal of the town better than those who live in it. Their conversation is amusingly simple, and they will dilate for an hour on the dresses they make for their images, and the manner in which they deck out the altar; in fact the whole tone of their behaviour is childish and frivolous. A nun I went to see one day, kept me for an hour expatiating on the beauty of an image of some saint which the sisterhood had purchased at a pawnbroker's shop. They had heard of it, and bought it for forty reals, and then she added: "Now we have put him on a new dress, you can form no idea how nice and pretty he looks!"



TALKING AT THE REJA.

CHAPTER VII.

Magnifico es el Alcazar
 Con que se ilustra Sevilla
 Deliciosos sus jardines
 Su escelsa portada rica.

DUQUE DE RIVAS.

PAINTINGS—CHURCH OF SAN ISIDORO—MUSEO—LA CARIDAD—MURILLO'S HOUSE—DEAN
 CEPERO—CHURCH OF THE UNIVERSITY—THE ALCAZAR—THE LONJA—PILFERINGS OF
 ENGLISH TOURISTS—CATHEDRAL LIBRARY—SAN TELMO—LAS DELICIAS—TORRE DEL ORO
 —TRIANA—GIPSIES—DANCES—PLAZAS—QUEEN'S PICTURE—CASA DE PILATOS—SOCIETY
 —TALKING AT THE REJA—MARRIAGES—THE THEATRE—CIGAR MANUFACTORY—CHARI-
 TABLE INSTITUTIONS—THE INFANTA.

THE church of San Isidoro contains a chef-d'œuvre by Roelas, representing the saint dying in the church of San Vicente. It is a splendid composition, but placed

in a light which renders it difficult to appreciate its various beauties. Roelas was one of the first great painters of the Seville school; he was born about 1560, and, like many others who shed a lustre on the arts and literature of Spain, belonged to the Church, and held a prebendal stall in the collegiate church of Olivarez. Most of the best pictures, which were in the convents of Seville, have been collected into that of the Merced, now converted into a museum, whose walls are adorned by some of the choicest creations of Murillo. For some time they found shelter in the cathedral, but in 1480 were removed to the convent, which had been prepared for their reception. Some have been arranged in the old church belonging to the building, but the greater number are placed in some of the rooms on the upper floor. The convent of the Merced was built by St. Ferdinand; it contains two lovely patios, and in the centre of the larger one are some gigantic weeping willows. The hall, to which travellers naturally turn with an impatient step, is that which contains the gems of Murillo's master hand—seventeen in number.

Here the walls glow with the paintings of him who is justly considered the pride of Seville. Here may be seen the varied forms of beauty, in which the great master delighted to portray the Virgin; now we behold her kneeling in meek and humble resignation listening to the joyful intelligence that the angel is conveying to the handmaiden of the Lord; now appearing in turn to some kneeling saint in a glorious halo of life and light as the Queen of Heaven, surrounded by cherubs such as Murillo only could depict. There is the figure of Saint Francis clasping the dying Saviour on the Cross, a masterpiece of drawing; the hand of the Redeemer rests upon the shoulder of the saint, whose eyes are fixed upon the Cross with a look of extatic devotion.

Here hangs Murillo's own favourite canvas, the Santo Tomas de Villanueva; it is indeed a glorious painting—the dignity of the prelate contrasting so forcibly with the squalid poverty of those who are waiting for his gifts; that urchin beggar-boy in front, the good bishop, whose face one cannot look on without love, and the life-like mendicant kneeling at his feet and watching with avidity the opening palm. Then the eye rests upon the soft and vapoury representation of St. Felix of Cantalicio, an exquisite production; and so is St. Anthony kneeling before a rock, on which the Child appears seated on an open book, pointing to the heavenly vision which appears above. The two patron saints of Seville are fine powerful figures, as they ought to be, considering that they hold the Giralda between them, rather an unwieldy burden for the hands of two fair damsels; they bear the palm-branch—the emblem of martyrdom—and the earthenware jars at their feet recal their trade as potters of Triana. Painted indeed with all the energy of life is the small Virgin and Child, better known as the *Servilleta*, from having been executed on a dinner napkin and presented as a parting gift to the cook of the Capuchin convent. The Child itself is starting out of the canvas, but brilliant as is the colouring of this renowned picture, I think one would not admire it less were it called by any other name. There is not anything heavenly about the expression of the Virgin; on the contrary, all speaks of earth.

There are many other pictures scattered upon the different walls of this convent, but none hardly claiming any notice. Some are most irresistibly ludicrous, representing all the sad temptations to which poor St. Francis and others were exposed during their sojourn in “this world of woe.” It would be hard to repress a smile at some of these strange productions, where saints appear persecuted



by his Satanic Majesty in every variety of disguise, not unfrequently selecting that of woman, who "with eyes of most unholy blue," endeavours to distract their attention. The costume too of these extraordinary compositions is not the least amusing part, for these early painters set aside all regard of time, and place, and dress, all being indiscriminately decked out in knightly costumes, and other things equally preposterous; as, for instance, in a picture of the Annunciation, alluded to by Pacheco, in which the Virgin had a rosary and a pair of spectacles hung up against the wall.

In the church, now no longer used, are some two or three fine paintings. One the celebrated Apotheosis of St. Thomas of Aquinas, considered to be the masterpiece of Zurbaran. This painter was born in Estremadura in 1598; he was a pupil of Roelas, and painted the friars of the Carthusian order with as much zest as his master did the disciples of Loyola. As a composition, this picture is not pleasing; it is divided into two portions; above appears the saint, below him are the four doctors of the Latin Church seated upon clouds, while in the lower part of the picture you see Charles V. kneeling before a table surrounded by bishops and courtiers. The transition between the upper and lower portion is harsh. Murillo's aerial tone is wanting here; but the colouring is splendid, and the robes of the Imperial Cæsar are worthy of the Venetian school. There are other paintings by the same master, and a fine Martyrdom of St. Andrew by Roelas. Above the Zurbaran hangs a grand Conception, by Murillo, of colossal size.

There is now a small catalogue sold at the Museum which enlightens the world, at all events, as to the names of the pictures and their authors; and even that piece of information could not be procured a few years ago. There are a few specimens of painted sculpture here;

the St. Jerome of Torrigiano and the St. Dominick of Montañes, the former in terra-cotta, the latter in wood. Torrigiano was the same who executed the sepulchre of our Henry VII. in Westminster Abbey. He died in the dungeons of the Inquisition at Seville, where he was thrown on account of having excited the anger of one of the nobles of that city. Montañes was a native of Alcalá; he was born towards the close of the sixteenth century. Many proofs of his extraordinary talent as a sculptor are to be seen at Seville. One of his most famous productions was Christ Bearing the Cross, which he admired so much himself, that he always stood at the corner of the street to see it pass when it was taken out in procession. It belonged formerly to this convent; now it adorns the church of San Miguel. Some fine carved seats, which were in the choir of the Carthusian convent, are also placed here. The Museum is only open to the public on Sundays and fête days, but travellers can always obtain admission by applying for a ticket.

In the hospital of the Caridad some few of Murillo's chef-d'œuvres are still preserved. This is an establishment for bed-ridden people, founded in the seventeenth century by a devout and pious knight of Calatrava, named Manara. He lies buried in a vault within, and in compliance with his wish, there is an inscription placed on a slab at the church door, recording that "there lie the bones and ashes of the worst man that ever lived." The pretty chapel was decorated with many gems of Murillo's, and although some of them were carried off to adorn the walls of Soult's mansion in Paris, a few still remain; the two most famous being Moses striking the Rock, and the Miracle of the loaves and fishes. In the latter the figure of the Saviour is not sufficiently prominent. Nothing can be more majestic than

the figure of Moses; and the whole composition is beautiful.

One cannot help being struck by the singular resemblance borne by the rock to the one still pointed out to travellers by the monks of Sinai as the scene of the miracle. These pictures, however, are seen to great disadvantage, hung, as they are, so far from the eye, and not by any means as bright in colouring as those of Murillo in general. The large one of San Juan de Dios is a powerful painting; the dark figure of the saint, and the sick man he is carrying along with difficulty, appear in shadow, while all the light is concentrated on the angel, who comes to assist him. This institution is admirably conducted, and the patients are attended by Sisters of Charity. One day, when we were lingering in the church, the sisters were all at their devotions. There was something so quiet and so holy about the scene, in that temple erected by the hand of charity, adorned with the triumph of art, to see those pious women kneeling before the altar of Him to whose service they had devoted their lives. The Sisterhood of Charity is certainly one of the most admirable institutions in the world; and long may it find devotees to fill its ranks, and long may they continue to do the good works for which St. Vincent de Paul established their order.

There is yet one place of pilgrimage to be visited in Seville, the house where Murillo died, now inhabited by the Dean, Don Manuel Cepero, a man who has endeavoured to preserve the remains of ancient art which still grace the city of Seville. In fact almost all that has been done of late years owes its existence to him; he preserved the Murillos from ruin by giving them shelter in the cathedral; and he caused the church belonging to the University, formerly the Jesuit College, to be arranged for the reception of some of the tombs which were about to

share the fate of the convent in which they had been erected. The church of the University is a fine temple, something in the grand and classic style of Herrera, to whom it has been attributed ; but it is more generally supposed to have been erected by a Jesuit, Bustamante, who flourished in the sixteenth century. When the followers of Ignatius were banished from Spain by Charles III. in 1767, the building was given over to the University ; the best pictures were taken from the church, and conveyed to the Alcazar, and it remained neglected until the Dean thought of turning it to account as a museum of art. The churregueresque retablos which adorned its walls were taken down and replaced by fine monuments from the Cartuja and other monastic edifices ; and here are many sepulchres of the family of Ribera, Marquises of Tarifa, who are now represented by the house of Medina Celi. Here, too, may be seen the tomb of the great Marquis Duke of Cadiz, who had been interred in the Augustine convent in this city. The name of Ponce de Leon recalls many a passage in the conquest of Granada ; an inscription records the date of his death, and the transfer of his remains to this church at the expense of the present Duke of Osuna, in whom the title of Duke of Arcos has merged. This church possesses a fine retablo by Roelas, representing a Holy Family with St. Ignatius Martyr and St. Ignatius Loyola, the patrons of the order. An Annunciation, by Pacheco, is above it. There is also in the church a pulpit in wood, most beautifully carved.

The taste for the fine arts, which prompted the Dean to restore the church of the University, has led him to take great pride in the house where he resides, and where it is believed Murillo died. It is close to the city wall ; and over the cancela, which leads into a pretty patio, is placed a portrait of Murillo, with a statement that in that

house he died. Nothing can exceed the kindness and affability with which the Dean escorts travellers over his house, which he has filled with pictures, some possessing considerable merit, although, perhaps, of doubtful authenticity. Murillo was born in Seville in 1617; he soon showed a fondness for drawing, and studied under Castillo. He used to paint pictures for sale at the weekly fair, which still takes place every Thursday near the old Alameda, and where every variety of old things is to be disposed of amid crowds of urchins, the very originals of Murillo's beggar boys.

Determined to improve himself by travelling, and seeing the works of foreign artists, he started for Madrid, where he soon advanced under the protection of his great countryman, Velasquez, who, like himself, was a native of Seville. But he soon returned to his native town, and commenced his career of glory by painting the well-known pictures in the Franciscan convent. His fame was now established, and in course of time he made a great step towards the promotion of art by founding an academy for painting in Seville, of which he was the first president. He died in 1682, after a long life passed in the pursuit of his art.

The mantle of Murillo has not, however, fallen on the modern school of Seville; her painters in the present day are not distinguished for talent. Some of them copy well the productions of their great master, but the taste for art in Spain is not calculated to bring forth and encourage genius. Spain has never produced any great landscape painters. Strange, that here in the south, where earth and sky are so beautiful, men should never have sought to copy the scenes before them; while in northern lands, beneath cloudy skies, the study of landscape painting should have been followed up with such ardour. Spanish art has been more exclusively devoted, than that